

# Guidance for educators

## Relationship and sex education (RSE)

The Department for Education's policy statement<sup>3</sup>, published in March 2017, explains the government's intention to amend the Children and Social Work Bill to introduce statutory:

- relationships education in primary schools
- relationships and sex education in secondary schools
- PSHE in all schools

It also outlines the need for statutory guidance and education, to address risks to children which have grown in prevalence in recent years, including online pornography, sexting and staying safe online. After a period of consultation, the Government has announced plans to make health education compulsory as well as new reformed relationships education in primary schools and relationships and sex education in secondary schools.<sup>4</sup> The new curriculum will focus on the following themes, with the intention to make it statutory in schools as of September 2020:

- different types of relationships, including friendships, family relationships, dealing with strangers and, at secondary school, intimate relationships
- how to recognise, understand and build healthy relationships, including self-respect and respect for others, commitment, tolerance, boundaries and consent, and how to manage conflict, and also how to recognise unhealthy relationships
- factual knowledge, at secondary school, around sex, sexual health, and sexuality
- how online pornography may affect health and wellbeing, including mental health and relationships

## What is high quality relationship and sex education?

The principles of high quality RSE in all schools<sup>5</sup> – including those with a religious character – are that relationships and sex education:

- is a partnership between home and school
- ensures children and young people's views are actively sought to influence lesson planning and teaching
- starts early and is relevant to pupils at each stage in their development and maturity
- is taught by people who are trained and confident in talking about issues such as healthy and unhealthy relationships, equality, pleasure, respect, abuse, sexuality, gender identity, sex and consent

### Knowledge and understanding

- includes the acquisition of knowledge, the development of life skills and respectful attitudes and values
- has sufficient time to cover a wide range of topics, with a strong emphasis on relationships, consent, rights, responsibilities to others, negotiation and communication skills, and accessing services
- helps pupils understand on and offline safety, consent, violence and exploitation

### Factual

- is both medically and factually correct and treats sex as a normal and pleasurable fact of life
- teaches pupils about the law and their rights to confidentiality even if they are under 16, and is linked to school-based and community health services and organisations

### Inclusive

- is inclusive of difference: gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, culture, age, faith or belief, or other life experience
- uses active learning methods, and is rigorously planned, assessed and evaluated
- helps pupils understand a range of views and beliefs about relationships and sex in society including some of the mixed messages about gender, sex and sexuality from different sources including the media
- promotes equality in relationships, recognises and challenges gender inequality and reflects girls' and boys' different experiences and needs

**"I think we need education that shows us what you see [in pornography] isn't what actually happens. It's not real life."**

*Young person, Childnet focus group*



3. [www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-rse-and-pshe](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-rse-and-pshe)

4. [www.gov.uk/government/news/new-relationships-and-health-education-in-schools](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-relationships-and-health-education-in-schools)

5. [www.pshe-association.org.uk/sites/default/files/SRE%20for%20the%2021st%20Century%20-%20FINAL.pdf\\_0.pdf](http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/sites/default/files/SRE%20for%20the%2021st%20Century%20-%20FINAL.pdf_0.pdf)

## What is high quality relationship and sex education? (Continued)

It contributes to:

- a positive ethos and environment for learning
- safeguarding pupils (Children Act 2004), promoting their emotional wellbeing, and improving their ability to achieve in school
- a better understanding of diversity and inclusion, a reduction in gender-based and homophobic prejudice, bullying and violence and an understanding of the difference between consenting and exploitative relationships
- helping pupils keep themselves safe from harm, both on and offline, enjoy their relationships and build confidence in accessing services if they need help and advice
- reducing early sexual activity, teenage conceptions, sexually transmitted infections, sexual exploitation and abuse, domestic violence and bullying

## How do I address these topics within a faith school?

Young people from all faiths and backgrounds are entitled to a strong RSE curriculum which guides them through the journey from adolescence to adulthood; enabling them to form healthy relationships and explore their own sexual awareness safely, including in the online world. RSE should always be developed in partnership with parents and the wider community and should be sensitive to the range of different values and beliefs we have within a multi-cultural and multi-faith society. The Sex Education Forum outlines the underlying principles for RSE within faith schools in their factsheet 'Faith, values and sex and relationships education'<sup>6</sup>, stating that RSE should:

- be relevant to young people and support them in learning about different faiths/ cultures and is underpinned by values promoting equality and respect
- provide young people with opportunities to understand the law and healthy issues in relation to sex, sexuality and sexual health
- Value diversity and anti-discriminatory practice

Understanding how relationships work and developing relationship skills gives a context for understanding human sexuality and sexual health. This is consistent, for example, with the Catholic Church's view that the purpose of RSE (Southwark, 2016, p. 3) is to secure "an adequate knowledge of the nature and importance of sexuality and of the harmonious and integral development of the person towards psychological maturity, with full spiritual maturity in view, to which all believers are called."

Schools of a religious character should refer to curriculum guidance provided at diocesan and church level nationally, for example:

- **The National Society for Promoting Religious Education RSE guidance for Anglican schools**<sup>7</sup>
- **The Catholic Diocese of Southwark's Education Service 'Education in Human Love Diocesan Policy for Relationship and Sex Education' in Catholic schools**<sup>8</sup>
- **The Muslim Council of Britain 'Meeting the needs of Muslim pupils in state schools' guidance, which gives good practice advice for RSE (chapter 10)**<sup>9</sup>

## How do we keep Senior Leadership Teams, Governing Boards and Management Committees informed and engaged with RSE?

It is important that all members of the school community are engaged with RSE in order to make sure it is inclusive, effective and embedded within the ethos of the school. Draft guidance published for the Department for Education in Feb 2019<sup>10</sup> states that 'As well as fulfilling their legal obligations, the governing boards or management committee should also make sure that:

- all pupils make progress in achieving the expected educational outcomes;
- the subjects are well led, effectively managed and well planned;
- the quality of provision is subject to regular and effective self-evaluation;
- teaching is delivered in ways that are accessible to all pupils with SEND;
- clear information is provided for parents on the subject content and the right to request that their child is withdrawn; and,

6. [schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/schools/files/folders/folders/documents/healthyschools/Faith,%20values%20and%20SRE%20-%20Sex%20Education%20Forum%20Factsheet.pdf](https://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/schools/files/folders/folders/documents/healthyschools/Faith,%20values%20and%20SRE%20-%20Sex%20Education%20Forum%20Factsheet.pdf)

7. [www.churchofengland.org/education/church-schools-academies/curriculum-and-religious-education.asp](http://www.churchofengland.org/education/church-schools-academies/curriculum-and-religious-education.asp)

8. [www.educationcommission.org.uk/SiteFiles/892.pdf](http://www.educationcommission.org.uk/SiteFiles/892.pdf)

9. [www.religionlaw.co.uk/MCBSchoolsreport07.pdf](http://www.religionlaw.co.uk/MCBSchoolsreport07.pdf)

10. [assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/781150/Draft\\_guidance\\_Relationships\\_Education\\_\\_Relationships\\_and\\_Sex\\_Education\\_\\_RSE\\_\\_and\\_Health\\_Education2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/781150/Draft_guidance_Relationships_Education__Relationships_and_Sex_Education__RSE__and_Health_Education2.pdf)

- the subjects are resourced, staffed and timetabled in a way that ensures that the school can fulfil its legal obligations.’

In order to effectively meet these requirements, the Sex Education Forum have provided a number of resources which can support your school:

- **Roadmap to statutory RSE** - This resource will help your school in preparing to provide high quality RSE
- **Principles of good RSE** - This resource sets out 12 principles of good RSE which have been led by research and are supported by a wide range of organisations including NSPCC, Barnardo’s, The Children’s Society and NCB, and the following education unions: ASCL, NASUWT, NEU, NAHT, UNISON and Voice
- **Whole school RSE audit tool** - This resource will help your school to self-audit your current provision for RSE and quickly identify areas of strength and those which need to be developed
- **Curriculum Design Tool** - This tool has been created to support educators in designing developmental, spiral and comprehensive curriculum programmes of study for RSE

## Handling sensitive and controversial issues

The topics discussed through RSE are likely to bring up some sensitive and controversial issues which could be challenging for a teacher to manage. Whilst young people must never be expected to discuss anything they feel uncomfortable with, it may be that they will want to discuss high profile cases or even draw on personal/peer experience and it is vital that they do so in a climate of trust, cooperation and support.

The PSHE Association outlined good practice when handling sensitive issues in their ‘Handling sensitive or controversial issues’ resource<sup>11</sup>, which states teachers should:

- work with pupils to establish ground rules and link PSHE education into the whole-school approach to supporting pupil welfare
- offer some opportunities for pupils to discuss issues confidentially in small groups as well as with the whole class
- be sensitive to the needs and experience of each pupil; remembering that some pupils may have direct experience of these issues
- make pupils aware of sources of information and support both inside and outside the school

You may wish to use a range of techniques to support class discussions around these sensitive topics, such as:

- same sex discussions – it may be more comfortable for the students/school/ parents if lessons are held in same sex groups taught by a teacher of the same sex. This may not be necessary for all lessons.
- distancing techniques – Using stories, TV programmes/characters, role play and scenarios based on real situations can provide fictional characters and storylines that stimulate discussion whilst ‘de-personalising’ any content

Some discussions or questions which young people raise might not feel appropriate for the session or may need more consideration before answering. In these cases you may wish to use one of the following techniques to pause the discussion:

- **‘Save it for later’** – Display a question wall or box in which questions, themes or topics which may not be appropriate for that lesson can be saved for future lessons or follow up discussions.
- **‘Oops and ouch’** - This method can be used if young people are discussing controversial issues which have the potential to cause offense. Anyone who finds a comment offensive or worrying can respond with ‘ouch’ and the speaker follows on by saying ‘oops’ and is given an opportunity to further explain their viewpoint. This method helps to avoid misunderstandings or possible resentment to form.
- **‘Time out’** - You could call a ‘time out’ when young people are showing signs of fatigue and or stress; this will provide them with a brief break and can give you an opportunity to take stock of the situation and decide how to proceed.
- **‘Pause and park’** - You may wish to hit the pause button on particular discussions and ‘park’ them until a later date. Try to give the young people an idea of when this discussion will be ‘unpaused’, this might be after the lesson, during a break or even after discussion with another member of staff.

11. [www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/handling-sensitive-or-controversial-issues-through](http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/handling-sensitive-or-controversial-issues-through)

## Support for the whole school community

It is important that support networks are communicated with young people.

**School** – Ensure young people know who they can go to within the school with specific worries or concerns. You may wish to display this information with photographs in key areas of the school, e.g. reception, lunch hall, tutor rooms, toilets.

**Childline** - [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) – A free, confidential service for children under the age of 19 to obtain counselling support online, via email or the phone – 0800 11 11

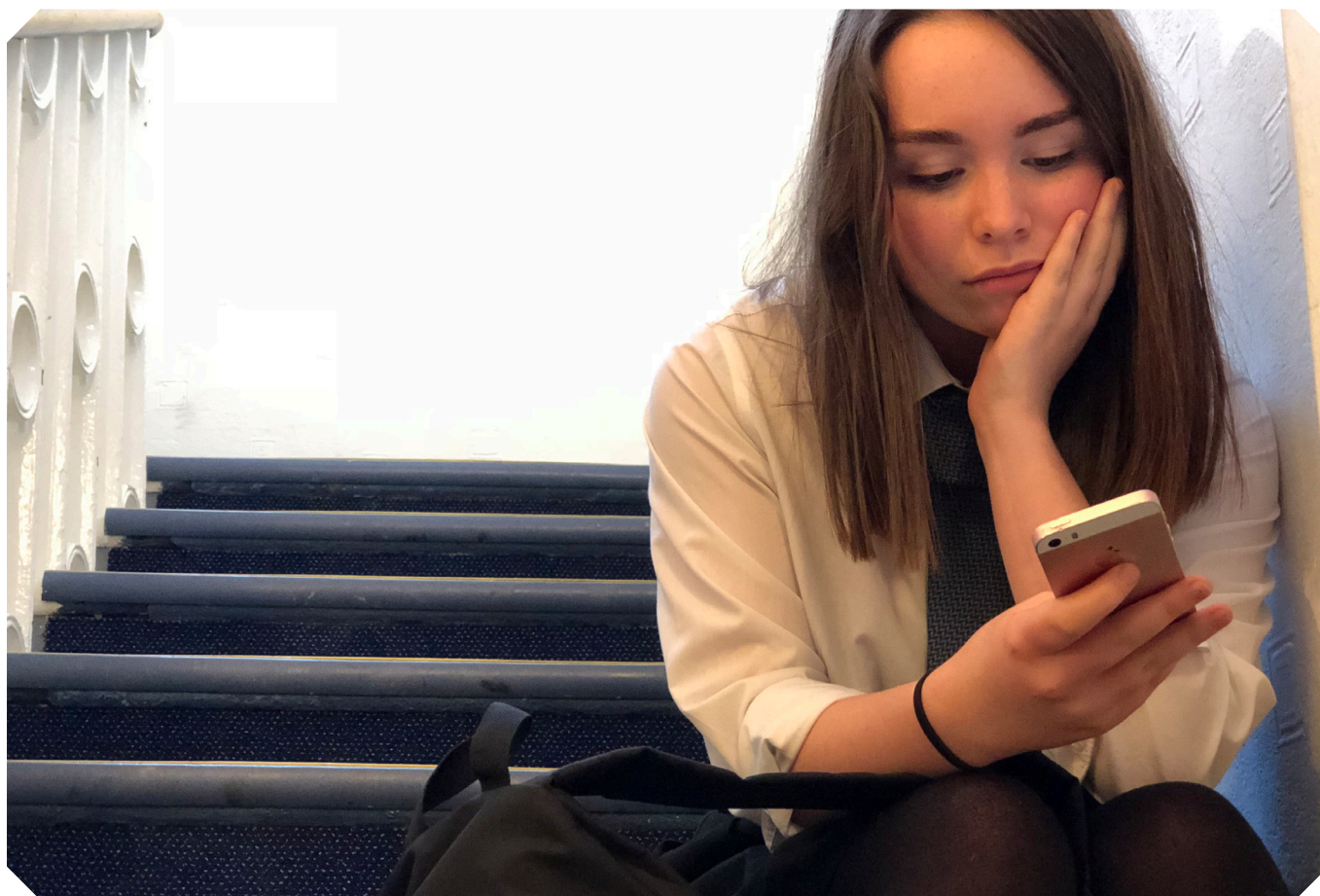
**The Mix** - [www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk) – A free and confidential multi-channel service for young people aged between 13-25 years old – 0808 808 4994

**Young Minds** – [youngminds.org.uk](http://youngminds.org.uk) - A mental health and wellbeing charity that offers support and guidance for young people through their website

**Papyrus** - [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org) – A free and confidential helpline for young people who may be contemplating harming themselves or committing suicide – 0800 068 4141

**Respect Phone Line** - [respectphonenumber.org.uk](http://respectphonenumber.org.uk) - A confidential and anonymous helpline for anyone concerned about their violence and/or abuse towards a partner or ex-partner – 0808 802 4040

**Youth Access** - [www.youthaccess.org.uk](http://www.youthaccess.org.uk) – Finding access to local counselling services for young people



## Keeping parents and carers informed

It is important to always work in partnership with parents and carers, and this is particularly effective with the topic of RSE. Students will come to school with a varying level of understanding about RSE, much of which may come from parents and carers, peers or the internet. However, not all parents and carers will find it easy to address the topic of RSE with their children. Some may rely on the school to deliver this education, whilst others might shy away from the topic altogether. Whilst teachers do have a responsibility to ensure the safety and welfare of their students, it is also important to take into account the beliefs and feelings of the family. Teachers are also expected to work within the agreed school values outlined in the school's policy, which must be in line with current legislation.

A parents' poll conducted by the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) found that more than eight in 10 (83%) say issues around pornography should form part of sex education lessons. The same proportion thought that parents and schools should take joint responsibility for teaching children about the issue, with just 13% of parents saying it is the parents' job alone and 4% saying it should be left to schools.

### Consulting parents

It is important to consult parents and carers on the content of RSE lessons, school policy and national curriculum requirements. This should be done with careful consideration of the family's own beliefs and concerns. Parents and carers need to know that the work being done in school will be age appropriate and support their role as a parent. They also need to be aware that they can actively be involved in determining and shaping the school's policy.

On **page 11** you will find an example parent and carers letter about intended age appropriate RSE.

### Parent's right to withdraw

Parents and carers have the right to withdraw their child from all or part of the sex and relationship education provided at school except for those parts included in the statutory National Science Curriculum. However, with careful consultation and open discussion about age appropriate RSE this withdrawal should be minimal.

On **page 12** you will find an example parent and carers consent form for RSE.

### Informing parents about intended RSE education

One way of effectively working in partnership with parents and carers is to hold an RSE curriculum meeting. This will allow you to:

- Outline RSE as a subject
- Review and share specific resources about RSE
- Allay any concerns parents and carers may have

Parents and carers may be nervous about attending meetings on RSE, so you could hold it as part of a broader PSHE curriculum meeting. Consideration also needs to be given to:

- How parents/carers will be invited (phone/letter)
- The language that is used for the invitations and whether any translations are needed
- The timing of the meetings
- Whether meetings should be single or mixed gender

**The Ealing Grid for Learning** have produced guidance on running an effective RSE workshop which includes a session outline.<sup>12</sup>

#### Example letters and forms

On the following two pages you will find:

- an example letter for Parents / Carers – Schools and Educational Settings
- an example consent form for Parents / Carers – Schools and Educational Settings

These can be used exactly as they are or adapted to meet the needs of your school or setting and are designed to support you in effectively communicating the needs of the RSE curriculum to parents and carers.

You may wish to edit them to include:

- information about school policies
- a personal note from senior leadership
- references to the school's ethos, values and faith
- any relevant information about previous knowledge and understanding about RSE

12. [www.egfl.org.uk/sites/default/files/School\\_effectiveness/Health-improvement/training-resources/Running%20a%20RSE%20parent%20workshop.pdf](http://www.egfl.org.uk/sites/default/files/School_effectiveness/Health-improvement/training-resources/Running%20a%20RSE%20parent%20workshop.pdf)

## Keeping parents and carers informed (Continued)

### Example Letter for Parents / Carers – Schools and Educational Settings

Name and address of school

Date

Dear Parents / Carers

As a school, we continually strive to provide our pupils with high-quality opportunities to learn the skills they need for a healthy, successful and happy life. This includes delivering Relationships and Sex Education (RSE).

Our RSE programme is age-appropriate and taught with family, cultural and religious sensitivities in mind; we respect the backgrounds of all our children. Some parts of RSE are compulsory e.g. areas relating to the National Curriculum for Science, however you have the right to withdraw your child from all other parts of RSE if you wish to do so.

Issues that affect the overall safety of young people are constantly changing. The availability of pornography online, the creation and sharing of inappropriate images, and the presentation of sexual images in social media are an ongoing concern. It is vital that all young people are given a safe place to discuss the pressures they face and understand the gap between perception and reality, in a fully supported environment. Although not all young people will be involved in these behaviours, research suggests that it has the potential to influence young people, their attitudes and even their sexual behaviour, and the perception of what constitutes healthy relationships and interactions. Even if a child is withdrawn, many pupils will continue to discuss such issues with each other outside the classroom – so, rather than hear about the content second-hand, we hope all children will have the opportunity to take part in our carefully planned lessons.

Our RSE curriculum will be taught in line with government recommendations and guidelines from the PSHE Association. We will sensitively explore the issues surrounding pornography, body image and healthy relationships whilst also covering the laws that currently apply to these areas.

*We can assure you that under no circumstances will examples of pornography, or anything of an explicit nature, be shown.*

You might want to take the opportunity to talk to your child about these issues before the work is covered in school. Childnet International provide support and guidance on their website [www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers](http://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers), including their page on having a conversation, advice on talking about difficult topics and a hot topic about online pornography.

If you have any queries about the content of the programme, or resources used, please do not hesitate in contacting me at school. We are happy to provide opportunities for parents and carers to find out more about our RSE Programme of Study, and in particular how we teach this topic. All materials used are available for you to browse through should you so wish.

I hope that after consideration of the above information you will give consent for your child to participate in lessons by signing and returning the attached slip. Should you have any further queries or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

(Name)

(Title)

## Keeping parents and carers informed (Continued)

### Example consent form for Parents / Carers – Schools and Educational Settings

Dear Parent/ Carer,

Please indicate whether or not you give consent for your child to participate in the RSE lessons outlined in this letter.

These lessons will include the following;

1. The promotion of healthy, mutually respectful, positive relationships based on trust and friendship.
2. Key information on misconceptions about what is 'normal' behaviour in healthy relationships online.
3. Online safety, appropriate use of social media, and the impact being online can have on body image, relationships and sex.
4. Accurate and up-to-date information about the potential impact that underage exposure to pornography can have on body image, and personal attitudes, values and expectations regarding sex and relationships.
5. Education about the laws governing the making, viewing and distribution of pornographic material (including the use of social media).

Should you have any further queries or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Name

Title

.....

#### School RSE curriculum

I / We give consent for our child to participate in the RSE lessons outlined in this letter.

Pupil's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Year group: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent / Guardian name (in capitals): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Please return to (insert name) by: \_\_\_\_\_

# Accompanying talking heads guidance

Let's talk about... a series of talking heads that talk about online pornography, healthy relationships and body image.

## Three characters. Three voices. What's your opinion?

### Meet the characters

Shaped by young people



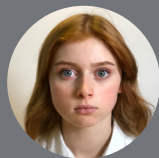
## Ryan

Ryan represents the percentage of boys who are heavily influenced by what they see online, by their peers, societal expectations and online pressures. Much of what he says is purposely controversial in order to spark debate.



## Beth

Beth represents the percentage of girls who feel pressurised by what they see online and worry about what might be expected of them. She often follows the trend in order to fit in and hides her thoughts and concerns.



## Sadie

Sadie represents those who aren't afraid to speak up and voice their opinion, even if it results in unwanted insults or derogatory comments from others. She shares a balanced opinion of her peers, being able to see things from other perspectives and understand the thoughts and feelings of others.

**"I think more people would like to say they are a Sadie but really they are a Ryan or a Beth... they might not want to say things or do things but they have to fit in."**


*Young person, Childnet focus group*


### About the talking heads


The talking heads have been formed from opinions and information we gathered through a series of focus groups conducted across the UK with young people aged 11-16. These open discussions unveiled the impact, expectations and pressure that young people are experiencing online with regards to **online pornography, healthy relationships and body image**. This information enabled us to devise three characters which provide a mouthpiece to represent these thoughts, feelings and concerns and provide a springboard for class discussion.

There are a total of nine talking heads with three sitting within each section of the toolkit to ignite a facilitated debate. Each character represents a varied viewpoint about online experiences, considering if we can trust everything we see online and how you separate the myths from the reality.

### Talking heads summaries

 **ONLINE PORNOGRAPHY** looks at the impact pornographic imagery is having on young minds. They set out to explore the influence, expectations and pressure young people can experience from viewing online pornography, both accidentally and on purpose, as well as the expectations that can arise from their peers/ partners engaging with it. They touch upon the reasons why someone might look at pornography, the ease of obtaining these images, the gender imbalance and the potential impact it can have in developing future relationships.

 **HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS** encompasses the unwritten rules of relationships that young people shared with us and looks at how these occur in the online world. These talking heads talk about the pressure of updating statuses, the need to gain likes and followers and how certain posts can have a negative impact on someone else's feelings. They seek to explore what defines a healthy relationship, the importance of consent and how it is obtained.

 **BODY IMAGE ONLINE** explores the necessity, pressure and expectation that many young people are feeling to always look their best in whatever they post online. It explores the way in which ideal body types are portrayed to us and the impact of this. It considers how the barrage of online advertisements, celebrity culture, comments and posts can dictate how we feel about ourselves and subsequently choose to present ourselves online.

### How to use the talking heads

Before you watch the talking head films, use the 'starter' questions on your lesson plan.

Each talking head ends with the question 'WHAT DO YOU THINK?' as a starting point for discussions about the character's comments. Each talking head is also accompanied with a series of questions to generate a facilitated discussion.

Whether you choose to watch the films individually, altogether or use the character scripts in the lesson appendices, the objective of the talking heads is to encourage a whole group discussion. This provides an opportunity for students to openly, confidently and safely discuss, challenge and unpick online myths.



# Using the toolkit for staff training

'Myth vs Reality' focuses on the topics of online pornography, healthy relationships and body image and considers how all three can link together in the online world. To deliver this toolkit effectively and feel confident in supporting young people with the issue of online pornography in particular, it may be useful to first hold a staff training session.

## Below you will find a guide for using this toolkit with staff during a training session:

Begin the session by explaining which topics this resource covers and how you intend to use it within your school. This could include which sessions it will be used in, the year groups you will deliver it to and which staff might facilitate the sessions. Make use of the information on **page 5** which outlines the toolkit, how it can be used and intended age groups.

### Establishing school ground rules and consulting with parents and carers

- ✓ Familiarise staff with the principles of high quality RSE on **pages 6-7**.
- ✓ Consider how the topics will fit into your community and whether there are any cultural or religious sensitivities to be aware of. Refer to guidance on **page 7**.
- ✓ Agree on a plan for involving and consulting with parents and carers. Refer to guidance on **pages 10-12**.
- ✓ Make use of the FAQs from educators on **pages 18-19** to support with staff questions.

### Toolkit outline

Online pornography/Healthy Relationships/  
Body Image

- Topic guidance for educators
- Lesson plan
- Lesson starter
- Set of 3 talking heads films giving the voice of young people
- Follow on discussion
- Toolkit of activities to build a lesson to suit different settings and timings
- Plenary and lesson reflection

## Understanding the topics and familiarising yourself with the resources

Depending on time available you can use the following suggestions to structure your training session and discuss the topics in more detail.

### Online Pornography

- ▶ Introduce this topic to staff by showing the short video explaining the topic and lesson outcomes:  
*This section tackles the topic of online pornography, considering how the messages or 'myths' within it can impact on the way young people feel about their bodies and relationships as well as how it might affect their behaviour or choices and the behaviour/choices of others.*
- ▶ Review the topic guidance on **page 21** and ensure all staff are clear on the messages about online pornography which are covered within this topic.
- ▶ Depending on time pick one or a selection of talking heads and lesson activities to run.

### Suggestion

Why not show Ryan's talking head and use the accompanying discussion questions to reflect on his viewpoint? You could discuss whether this is typical of young people within your setting and how you would challenge his view point in an appropriate manner.

**Activity C** from the lesson plan would then make a great follow on activity where staff can consider what strategies young people can use to avoid watching pornography and communicate to their friends, partners or peers about how they are feeling.

### Key points to remember

- No pornography will be shown during the lesson or the talking heads films.
- Young people will not be asked directly to discuss whether they have or have not seen pornography.



# Using the toolkit for staff training (Continued)



## Healthy Relationships Online

- ▶ Introduce this topic to staff by showing the short video explaining the topic and lesson outcomes:  
*This section is all about how the online world can shape and affect young people's platonic and romantic relationships, both positively and negatively. It considers what constitutes a healthy relationship and explores how consent works in the digital world.*
- ▶ Review the topic guidance on **pages 36-37** and ensure all staff are clear on the messages about healthy relationships online which are covered within this topic.
- ▶ Depending on time pick one or a selection of talking heads and lesson activities to run.

### Suggestion

Why not show Beth's talking head and use the accompanying discussion questions to reflect on her viewpoint? You could discuss whether this is typical of young people within your setting and how you would identify and support young people who may be in an unhealthy relationship (refer to advice on **page 37**).

**Activity A** from the lesson plan would then make a great follow on activity where staff can consider which online behaviours are healthy within a relationship and which might be unhealthy. There is advice on what constitutes a healthy relationship on **page 36**.

## Body Image Online

- ▶ Introduce this topic to staff by showing the short video explaining the topic and lesson outcomes:  
*This section we tackle the issue of body image and explore what influence the online world can have on how young people feel about themselves. It will look at the online pressure to create and maintain your own personal 'brand' and how this can impact on young people.*
- ▶ Review the topic guidance on **page 52** and ensure all staff are clear on the messages about body image online which are covered within this topic. Particularly, the messages about personal online 'brands'.
- ▶ Depending on time pick one or a selection of talking heads and lesson activities to run.

### Suggestion

Why not show Sadie's talking head and use the accompanying discussion questions to reflect on her viewpoint? You could discuss whether this is typical of young people within your setting and how we can challenge the idea of a 'perfect' body, life, relationship etc that we may see being portrayed online.

**Activity B** from the lesson plan would then make a great follow on activity where staff can reflect on what goes into creating personal online 'brands' and the impact this can have on the young person posting the content and on the young people viewing it.

### Key points to remember

- During our focus groups young people told us that education around body image needed to change and evolve to include messages around your online 'brand'. Online pressures can not only effect the way we see our bodies but also the choices we make in terms of our clothes, poses, filter of choice etc. which all come together to produce the version of ourselves that we portray online.

## Handling sensitive topics

The topics discussed through RSE are likely to bring up some sensitive and controversial issues which could be challenging for a teacher to manage. It would be beneficial for staff to discuss what questions or topics might come up and consider how they would respond or formulate a school response together. There is advice for handling sensitive and controversial issues on **page 8** along with techniques which can be used to pause difficult discussions and regain focus.

## Need help?

If you need further support with online issues, then refer to Childnet's hot topics guidance

[www.childnet.com/teachers-hot-topics](http://www.childnet.com/teachers-hot-topics) or contact the Professionals

Online Safety Helpline (POSH) on

**0344 381 4772** or

[helpline@saferinternet.org.uk](mailto:helpline@saferinternet.org.uk)

# Establishing a safe environment for a high quality PSHE lesson

- \ **1 Set up clear ground rules:** Create ground rules through a class contract or working agreement with students which will clearly state the agreed basis on which all discussions/ participation will take place. Examples could include: taking care when divulging information about ourselves or listening to each other without judgement each other without judgement. An effective set of ground rules will be in language that is age appropriate and, as far as possible, devised as positive behaviours, e.g. 'We will listen to each other', 'We will be sensitive to the needs of other people'.
- \ **2 Non-judgemental approach:** A good PSHE lesson generates discussion, and although some views or opinions can and should be challenged, it is important not to shame or judge a student who shares something sensitive or controversial with the class. Instead, educators should praise students who keep to the ground rules and appropriately challenge those who do not.
- \ **3 'No real names' policy:** It is important that students feel that their learning is taking place in a safe environment and a PSHE lesson should be a safe place for them to speak about their feelings, thoughts and opinions, if they so wish. To protect themselves, and others, students should always talk in the third person and speak about 'a friend' or 'someone they know' instead of using people's real names.
- \ **4 Listening to others:** It is important that all students feel they can share their thoughts and opinions freely and that they will be listened to by both the other students and teacher. Students should feel that any comment or question can be asked no matter how small.
- \ **5 No obligation to participate:** It is important to reassure students that they do not have to participate in anything that makes them feel uncomfortable or answer any question which they feel is too personal. If at any point a student wishes not to participate in a certain activity it is better not to insist on it as it may be the case that they have direct personal experience of some of the issues being discussed, and therefore taking part may feel overwhelming.
- \ **6 Handling questions:** Given the sensitive nature of the topics discussed in PSHE lessons it may be that you are asked something which you are unsure of or not comfortable answering. It is important to check you've understood their question clearly and explain that you might not know the answer, but that you will find out more and get back to them later. You might need to consult a more senior colleague or check the school policy if it is a safeguarding issue. Try to always ask the students themselves what they think before giving your opinion.  
  
Be aware that how you answer a question may depend on the situation in which it was asked. Consider different responses such as: short, simple answer to the class, answer them privately after the lesson or value the question but explain it goes beyond the lesson's learning objectives and that you can talk about it another time. You may also wish to have an anonymous question box available for students to ask more sensitive questions. For more ideas on how to handle sensitive and controversial issues see **page 8**.
- \ **7 Seating plans:** As PSHE is a diverse curriculum area where discussion plays a large part in the learning, it may be worth considering an ideal or an alternative seating arrangement that encourages discussion and involvement. Some activities may also require the students to move around so a more open space may be preferable.
- \ **8 Expectations around disclosures:** It is important for young people to understand that while the session provides a space to be open and honest, the school has a duty of care to protect young people. Any disclosures made that are considered by an educator to be a safeguarding issue cannot be kept a secret and must be followed up. This should be reported in line with your school's safeguarding policy.

For more guidance on how to approach a high quality PSHE lesson you can read the **PSHE Association's guidelines**<sup>13</sup>.

13. [www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/curriculum](http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/curriculum)

# Laws about online behaviour

Often there is the perception that people can do whatever they want from behind a screen but there are a number of laws that apply to behaviour online. Below you will find a set of FAQs relating to the law online.

## ? Are there laws which relate to how people speak to each other online?

There are a number of laws which cover how people speak to each other in both the real world and online. They are:

- ▶ **Communications Act 2003:** This Act covers all forms and types of public communication. With regards to comments online, it covers the sending of grossly offensive, obscene, menacing or indecent communications and any communication that causes needless anxiety or contains false accusation.
- ▶ **Protection from Harassment Act 1997:** This Act covers any form of harassment that has occurred 'repeatedly'; in this instance, 'repeatedly' means on more than two occasions.
- ▶ **The Malicious Communications Act 1988:** This Act covers the sending of grossly offensive or threatening letters, electronic communications or any other form of message with the intention of causing harm, distress or anxiety.
- ▶ **Equality Act 2010:** This Act states that it is against the law to discriminate against anyone on the ground of protected characteristics. These include disability, gender reassignment (when a person undergoes a process, or part of a process – social or medical – for the purpose of reassigning their sex), race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

## ? Are there laws around what should and shouldn't be shared online?

There are a number of laws which cover illegal online content. They are:

- ▶ **The Computer Misuse Act 1990:** Criminalises the impersonation or theft of someone else's identity online. For example, this would mean that writing a status on social media pretending to be your friend would technically be against the law.
- ▶ **The Protection of Children Act 1978:** Criminalises the taking, creating, showing, distributing, possessing with a view to distributing, and publishing any advertisement of indecent photographs of children (anyone under the age of 18).
- ▶ **Criminal Justice Act 1988:** Makes the possession of indecent photographs of children (under 18) a criminal offence.
- ▶ **Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015** criminalises the sharing of private, sexual photographs or films ('revenge porn') of adults without their consent, with the intent to cause distress.

## ? Are there any specific laws around pornography?

Pornographic magazines and videos can be legally bought at 18, and all regulated porn websites try to prevent under 18s from accessing them. The government has recently clarified existing obscenity laws to ensure that materials rated only suitable for 18 year olds (and above) have age verification controls in place to stop children under 18 from accessing them.

However, there are certain types of pornography that are illegal to ever be seen, distributed and held – even for an adult (anyone 18 or over). These are called "extreme pornographic images", and include acts that threaten a person's life, acts which are likely to, or, result in serious injury, degrading porn, violent porn (which includes rape and abuse) or anything involving animals or those under the age of 18.

[www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-porn/](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-porn/)

Creating, distributing or generating a sexually explicit or partially nude image of someone under the age of 18 is illegal under the **Protection of Children Act 1978**. It is illegal for a person under 18 to send explicit images or films of themselves, or of another young person. By sending an explicit image, a young person is producing and distributing indecent images of a child and risks being prosecuted, even if the picture is taken and shared with their permission.

As with anything, context is always key to a situation and whilst these laws exist police are not necessarily looking to prosecute young people, particularly for a first offence. Instead any incident will be first and foremost be dealt with as a safeguarding concern. Refer to '**Sexting in schools and colleges: Responding to incidents and safeguarding young people**' guidance produced by the UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS)<sup>14</sup>.

14. <http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexting-in-schools-and-colleges>

# FAQs from educators

## ? What should I do if I suspect that one of the issues is directly affecting any of my students?

If a student displays worrying behaviour or makes reference to events/experiences which concern you then always refer to your school's safeguarding policy and share your concerns with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). It may be that this student needs additional support and advice which the lesson is not designed to cover, so it is important to work in partnership with the student and their family to ensure appropriate provision is made.

If you would like advice on a specific concern then we recommend you contact the Professionals Online Safety Helpline (POSH) on **0344 381 4772** or by emailing [helpline@saferinternet.org.uk](mailto:helpline@saferinternet.org.uk). Alternatively you can contact the NSPCC helpline on **0808 800 5000** or email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk).

## ? How should I handle disclosures made about something online?

Online safety is a safeguarding issue, as recognised by Ofsted and by the Department for Education. If a child comes to you about something that is worrying them online, whether it be from negative contact they have received or from being shown something upsetting online, you should deal with this information in the same way as you would treat any safeguarding issue. Ensure you are familiar with your school's safeguarding policy so that you know how to take the appropriate action. For more information on **how to deal with disclosures**, visit our Childnet website [www.childnet.com/handling-disclosures](http://www.childnet.com/handling-disclosures).

In **Ofsted's eyes**, "Safeguarding is not just about protecting children, learners and vulnerable adults from deliberate harm, neglect and failure to act. It relates to broader aspects of care and education, including: ...online safety and associated issues." In the Department for Education's '**Keeping children safe in education: Information for all school and college staff**'<sup>15</sup> (September 2018) safeguarding requirements are outlined and negative online contact could be seen as a form of emotional abuse and being shown something inappropriate online as a form of sexual abuse.

## ? My students switch off when I talk about being safe online as they say that I don't understand, or they explain that they know all about the risks online. What should I do?

Between the ages of 11-14, young people are finding out who they are, where they fit in and who their friendship groups are. Sometimes they may turn to the internet for answers and although many young people find comfort from support groups online, others may find it a confusing place. It is important to acknowledge young people's views and remember that they will use the internet differently given that they are growing up with it. However, you still know how to keep them safe and can share with them reporting routes and where they can go to get advice and support.

Although it is vital that young people know about the online risks that exist, this toolkit is more about generating discussion about what they see online, or how online content might make them feel. The online world contains so many different sources of information and content that it can be hard to know what you can truly believe. This toolkit helps young people explore different online messages and separate the myth from the reality. Moreover, an Ofsted report from 2013 '**Not yet good enough: PSHE education in schools**'<sup>16</sup>, stated that in "just under half of schools, pupils received lessons about staying safe but few had developed the skills to effectively apply their understanding, such as assertiveness skills to stand up for themselves and negotiate their way through difficult situations." This shows that although young people might be aware that they need to be safe online, they don't always apply their learning so it is always worth revisiting and giving them opportunities to apply their skills to different situations.

## ? How can I talk about these issues when I don't want to introduce my students to things they haven't necessarily heard of?

Young people are experiencing increasing pressures from the internet and social media but it is important to remember that they all have different maturation rates and levels of sexual awareness. Therefore it is vital to explore the issues they may be facing in an age appropriate manner in order to enable them to form healthy relationships with others and their own sexual awareness.

Beginning any unit of work with a brief pre-assessment of your students' understanding and needs will help you to ensure the lesson is pitched appropriately. This can be done through mind mapping existing knowledge and exploring a topic further using the suggested starter activities and the talking heads questions.

It is important to take a sensitive and non-judgemental approach to these topics and work in partnership with parents. Review our advice for involving parent and carers on **pages 10-12**.

You may also wish to use techniques such as 'Save it for later' boxes/walls to capture questions and discussions not appropriate for that session.

15. [www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2)

16. [www.gov.uk/government/publications/not-yet-good-enough-personal-social-health-and-economic-education](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/not-yet-good-enough-personal-social-health-and-economic-education)

# FAQs from educators (Continued)

## ? How do I approach topics that I feel uncomfortable in teaching and use terminology that I am unfamiliar with?

From our work with educators we know that they feel least confident in talking about the topic of online pornography with their students. This toolkit has been designed to address this and support teachers in tackling this important and difficult topic with young people.

It is understandable that not every teacher will feel best placed to discuss such sensitive topics with their students but there are a number of things you can do in order to feel more prepared. You can:

- ▶ Begin by reviewing the educator's guidance and individual lesson guidance in full to ensure you are clear on the key objectives and messages.
- ▶ Run through the teacher's guidance with other staff as part of a CPD session and speak with senior leadership or lead teachers to make sure you know your school's policy. You will find a guide for using this toolkit in a staff training session on **pages 14-15**.
- ▶ Refer to the 'Handling sensitive and controversial issues' advice on **page 8**.
- ▶ Keep to the discussion questions and use the Childnet focus group quotes and suggested answers as a guide for discussions.
- ▶ Check for CPD training in your area, local authority or through external agencies such as the PSHE Association [www.pshe-association.org.uk/cpd-and-training](http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/cpd-and-training).

## ? How can I use this resource with young people who have specific learning needs?

Whilst this resource is not specifically designed to be used in a SEN school many of the activities are easily adaptable and have been created under a Creative Commons license. You may wish to replace some words with images by using software such as Communication in Print or by allowing the students to draw instead of write or discuss their answer.

In some of the lesson plans suggestions have been made for how the activity can be tailored to meet specific needs.

## ? Can I make changes to the worksheets to adapt them for my group?

'Myth vs Reality' is a free, downloadable Creative Commons resource for schools and youth groups to use. Lesson plans can be easily downloaded from our website, although changes can't be made directly to the worksheets as they are in PDF form. For more information, look at the following link: [creativecommons.org/licenses/by-ncsa/4.0/](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-ncsa/4.0/)

If you do have amendments, suggestions for activities or feedback then please contact [education@childnet.com](mailto:education@childnet.com).

